

REMARKS

An Abstract of the Disclosure has been provided as required in the last Office Action.

Claim 10 has been canceled without prejudice in order to advance the prosecution of the present application. Claims 1-9 inclusive have been amended to overcome the objections noted by the Examiner in the last Office Action.

In the last Office Action, claims 1-10 inclusive were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Bush et al, WO 00/10912. Claim 10 has been canceled without prejudice in order to advance the prosecution of the present application. Reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-9 inclusive are respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

The present invention relates to a process for obtaining a high temperature heating fluid to be used as indirect heating source for carrying out endothermic reactions.

As correctly pointed out by the Examiner, the claimed process differs from Bush et al at least in the features recited in the characterizing portion of such a claim.

In other words, the Examiner has clearly recognized that the step of feeding a flow comprising water to the high temperature fluid and/or to the combustor is not disclosed in the cited prior art.

The technical problem to be solved by the present invention is thus that of providing a process for obtaining a high temperature heating fluid that improves the performances in terms of reliability and maintenance costs of the reforming apparatus in which such a high temperature fluid is used as heat source to support the reforming reactions.

In this respect, please refer to the description at page 6, line 22 to page 8, line 15.

In Bush et al, the above technical problem and the claimed solution thereof are not suggested.

Bush et al teaches recycling a portion of the combustion product stream (the high temperature heating fluid in present claim 1) in the pressurized oxidant flow w(the gas flow comprising oxygen in the present claim 1) before the oxidant enters the combustor (see, for instance, the Office Action, page 4, lines 4-5; Bush et al, page 13, lines 14-17 and Fig. 2, reference signs 38-40)..

Contrary to what is stated by the Examiner, the recycle combustion gas stream is not oxygen enriched air but an inert gas having no more than 2% oxygen (see, for instance, Bush et al, page 13, lines 21-22).

Moreover, such a recycle takes place downstream of the combustor. No additional flow (recycle or not) is thus fed to the combustor or even to the combustion gas stream itself.

According to Bush et al, the purpose of feeding the inert gas to the oxidant flow fed to the combustor is to attenuate and control the temperature of the combustion product stream used as indirect heat source to support the endothermic reforming reaction to temperature ranging between 1000°C and 1600°C (see, for instance, Bush et al, page 12, lines 10-13, page 13, lines 17-24).

The claimed step of feeding a flow comprising water to the high temperature fluid and/or to the combustor as well as any incentive to do so are thus totally missing from Bush et al.

Therefore, the skilled person faced with the problem of metal dusting in reforming apparatuses and aiming to improve their reliability and reduce their maintenance costs, would

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have never considered Bush et al, as a relevant prior art since such a document is concerned with a different technical problem and gives no suggestion or teaching of how to solve the problem of the present invention.

There is no prior art substantiation to the Examiner's assertion that it would have been obvious to the skilled person to use a flow comprising water in place of the recycle combustion product stream.

In view of the foregoing amendments and argument, it is submitted that claims 1-9 inclusive would not be the least bit obvious in view of the teachings of Bush et al. Therefore, it is requested that claims 1-9 inclusive be allowed and the application past to issue forthwith.

If for any reason the Examiner is unable to allow the application on the next Office Action, and feels that an interview would be helpful to resolve any remaining issue, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned attorney for the purpose of arranging such an interview.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

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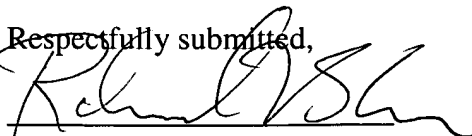
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Respectfully submitted,



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